

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-01 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 ICA-11 OES-09
SP-02 SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 PA-01 NRC-05
SES-02 EA-10 /158 W
-----037409 022320Z /23

R 011220Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO /SECSTATE WASHDC 3134
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MNUC, IN
SUBJECT: ANOTHER NUCLEAR DEBATE

REF: NEW DELHI 11462

1. IN THE MORNING SESSION OF THE RAJYA SABHA JULY 31, IN
ANSWER TO A CALLING ATTENTION MOTION, THE PRIME MINISTER READ
A STATEMENT (TEXT SEPTTEL) IN WHICH HE REITERATED HIS OPPOSI-
TION TO NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS BUT MADE NO REFERENCES TO NUCLEAR
"BLASTS" FOR CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSES. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID
THAT IN THE HISTORY OF NUCLEAR RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT THE
TEMPTATION TO SWITCH OVER FROM PEACEFUL TO NON-PEACEFUL USES
HAS PROVED DIFFICULT TO RESIST. THE POKHARAN TEST, HE SAID,
WAS TAKEN "BY THE WORLD AT LARGE" AS A DEPARTURE FROM THE
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GOI'S POLICY OF DEVELOPING NUCLEAR RESEARCH FOR PEACEFUL PUR-
POSES AND CREATED DIFFICULTIES IN INDIA'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH
NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS. HE REPEATED HIS VIEW THAT THE USA AND USSR
WERE NEGOTIATING A CTB FOR A THREE-TO-FIVE YEAR DURATION "AT
LEAST" AND NOTED THE SSOD ENDORSEMENT OF A CTB TREATY. ON
THE SCIENTIFIC NECESSITY FOR EXPLOSIONS, THE PRIME MINISTER
SAID THAT HE KNEW OF NO USES OF EXPLOSIONS THAT WERE WORTH

THE ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS INVOLVED. DESAI SAID THAT INDIA'S UNILATERAL ANTI-EXPLOSION POSITION HAS BEEN JUSTIFIED BY THE "DEVELOPING CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD", NOTED THAT FRANCE HAS BEEN ADAPTING ITSELF TO THAT CONSCIENCE BY ACCEPTING CERTAIN SAFEGUARDS, AND EXPRESSED HIS FIRM CONVICTION THAT CHINA WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BEND TO THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD THAT THE BUILD-UP OF NUCLEAR ARMS BE HALTED. HE SAID THAT THE ONLY WAY TO EXORCIST THE DEMON OF USING NUCLEAR SCIENCE FOR NON-PEACEFUL PURPOSES IS TO OUTLAW ALL ATOMIC TESTS OR EXPLOSIONS.

2. THERE WERE NO EFFORTS TO QUESTION THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE RAJYA SABHA ADJOURNED FOR LUNCH. IN THE AFTERNOON SESSION, HOWEVER, TWO CONGRESS (I) AND TWO CPI MEMBERS DELIVERED LENGTHY AND SCATHING ATTACKS ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S NUCLEAR POLICY, HIS CONDEMNATION OF THE POKHARAN TEST, AND HIS FAILURE TO ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THE QUESTION OF "BLASTS" IN HIS MORNING STATEMENT. THEY ACCUSED THE PRIME MINISTER OF HAVING SUCCUMBED TO US "NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL", ALLEGED THAT AMBASSADOR GOHEEN'S REQUEST FOR A CLARIFICATION OF THE PM'S REMARKS LAST WEEK WAS INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF INDIA, AND CHARGED THAT THE US ALWAYS OPPOSED INDIA'S POLICIES. A CONGRESS (I) MP CHARGED THAT IT IS THROUGH THE CIA AND THE GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION THAT INDIA'S INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED POLICY IS BEING UNDERMINED AND ADDED "UNFORTUNATELY" THE PRIME MINISTER IS A MEMBER OF THE GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION.

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3. IN RESPONSE TO HIS CRITICS THE PRIME MINISTER AGAIN SAID THAT HIS POLICY WAS NOT THE RESULT OF PRESSURE, THAT SCIENTISTS DIFFERED ON THE NEED FOR TESTS, AND THAT OTHER AMBASSADORS INCLUDING THE SOVIET HAD MADE INQUIRIES ABOUT HIS STATEMENT. ON THE QUESTION OF BLASTS, DESAI AGAIN SAID THAT THEY WERE DIFFERENT "ENTIRELY" FROM EXPLOSIONS. HE ADDED THAT IF HE IS ASSURED THAT BLASTS CAN BE USED FOR MINING WITHOUT CREATING POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS, THEY WOULD BE USED BUT THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER SUCH USES WITHOUT HAZARDS ARE POSSIBLE. HE ALSO INSISTED HE WAS NOT "GIVING DIFFERENT POLICIES." EXCERPTS FROM PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSE ARE INCLUDED IN SEPTTEL.

4. ACCORDING TO A WIRE SERVICE REPORT FROM LUCKNOW AUGUST 1, MRS. GANDHI DENIED THAT THE POKHARAN TEST WAS CONDUCTED FOR POLITICAL REASONS AND REPORTEDLY SAID THE ONLY CONSIDERATION BEHIND THE TEST WAS "THAT INDIA'S PRESTIGE WILL BE ENHANCED IF WE SUCCEEDED." SHE ALSO REPORTEDLY CRITICIZED DESAI FOR MAKING CONFLICTING STATEMENTS ON NUCLEAR POLICY.

5. COMMENT: THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT WAS VERY CAREFULLY WORDED EFFORT TO AVOID THE EXPLOSION VS BLAST CONTROL

VERSY AND TO PUT THE EMPHASIS UPON THE DANGERS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IN ANY FORM AND TO REITERATE DESAI'S VIEW THAT EXPLOSIONS ARE UNNECESSARY. THE OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, SEIZED FULLY UPON HIS FAILURE TO MENTION THE BLAST/EXPLOSION DISTINCTION TO CHARGE THAT HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND IS CONFUSED IN HIS POLICY. THEY ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DESAI'S INSISTANCE IN STANDING BY HIS STATEMENT ON THE NATURE OF BLASTS TO CONTINUE THEIR ATTACKS UPON HIM. IN HIS STATEMENT, THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO STRESSED THAT NUCLEAR SCIENCE IS A HUMANITARIAN AND POLITICAL PROBLEM AS WELL AS A SCIENTIFIC ONE AND THAT THE QUESTION OF PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS IS NOT A NATIONAL ISSUE BUT AN INTERNATIONAL ONE REQUIRING COLLECTIVE DELIBERATION. THE OPPOSITION IN RESPONSE PLAYED THE NATIONALIST THEME TO THE HILT, ACCUSING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DESAI NOT ONLY OF SUCCUMBING TO US PRESSURE BUT ALSO OF DENIGRATING INDIAN SCIENTIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOWERING INDIA'S PRESTIGE IN THE THIRD WORLD.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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